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SUBJECT: GUINEA SWEARS IN NEW MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION

REF: CONAKRY 00010

¶1. (U) Guinea,s new Minister of Communication, Issa Conde, was sworn into office on January 7 by the Secretary General of the Presidency, Sam Soumah. Contrary to protocol and tradition, the previous Minister, Justin Morel Jr., who was fired by President Conte on January 3 (reftel), was not in attendance. No members of Prime Minister Kouyate,s government were present. Contacts report that the Secretary General of the Prime Minister,s office normally swears in new cabinet members, but the President,s office alleged that they could get no one at the PM's offices to answer their phones (septel).

COMMENT

¶2. (SBU) Conte,s firing of Justin Morel seems to be at the heart of Guinea,s current political power struggle. Kouyate has made it clear that he cannot accept the new Minister since the PM has the authority to appoint his own cabinet according to the January 27 Accords. At the same time, President Conte is unlikely to back down on the new appointment since doing so would seriously undermine his own power and authority. The PM traditionally holds his cabinet meetings on Wednesdays, which means the next one is scheduled for January 9. Citizens and observers alike are watching to see if the PM will allow Issa Conde into the meeting. If he does not, it is likely to be perceived as a direct slap in the face against President Conte. END COMMENT.
CARTER